

MRS. LANCASTER'S RIVAL.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "A FRENCH HEIRESS
IN HER OWN CHATEAU."

(Continued)

It was a very pretty face that was looking up at him in the twilight; fair, with soft blue eyes, and the red-gold hair that the old painters loved—the face of Dick's first love, for whom he had doted his grandfather's anger and his aunt's alternate laughing and remonstrance. She had been everything to him for a few months then—all the heroines of romance rolled into one; and she, a clever, ambitious girl, four or five years older than himself, whose relations were nobility, had seriously thought of marrying him, simply because he was a gentleman. Aunt Kate, by some wise strategy of hers, had prevented any sentimental parting, at which Dick might have sworn eternal constancy; and Flora Cardew had soon after consoled herself with one of the curates. They went away at once from St. Denis, and report said it was not a happy marriage. Anyhow, the curate died in a few years, and Flora, having quarreled with his relations, came back to her own. She now lived quietly at home, and was kind to her old father and mother. No one in St. Denis liked her, and yet no one had much to say against her; perhaps, as she herself calmly remarked, it was jealousy. One attraction in Flora was, however, that she never seemed conscious of her own beauty. Her eyes, as they looked up curiously, gently, almost tenderly into Dick's face, were not asking for admiration. They simply said, "How we are both changed! but you, my old friend, are very much improved, and I should hardly have known you."

All the confusion was on his side. In the moment of dead silence, as they stood there looking at each other, he caught himself wishing bad thoughts about Mrs. Lancaster. Did she suppose he was the same fool that went away ten years ago? Then he repented a little, collected himself, and hoped she was quite well. Mrs. Lancaster sighed.

"Not very well, thank you. I see you think I am sadly altered. You can't be young forever. I dare say I look like a ghost to-night; I have been shopping at Morebay all day long, and this hill is such a drag when one comes home tired."

A great pity for weak things was one of the strong points in Dick's imperfect character. He looked down, saw that she was carrying a basket and a large parcel, and took them out of her hands at once, with the authority of an old friend.

"O, never mind—thank you," said Mrs. Lancaster, faintly.

"How can you attempt to carry such a load up this hill?" said Dick.

"There was nobody else. Our little maid was too busy to come down to meet me. But I can't let you do it. You are waiting for your aunt; and you only came to-day."

"My aunt is safe for ten minutes, at least. Yes, I got here this evening. Did you come up by the boat?"

"I did. It was so lovely on the water. I was thinking of you as I came up, because I heard you were expected. Do you remember frightening me so terribly one night?"

"What, by dropping into the water down at Morebay—awful!" said Dick, with a slight laugh. "But you were not frightened; you laughed at me."

"O, but indeed I was. I wonder now you were not drowned, or did not strike your head against something. I have been nervous at stepping aboard ever since. Frightened! how little you knew!"

"Well, it might have been a bad affair, as I was out without leave. However, as no harm came of it, suppose we forget it. Except Mrs. Cardew's kindness in drying me so thoroughly before she sent me home. What a plague I must have been! How are Captain and Mrs. Cardew?"

"They are very well. They will be glad to hear that you have not forgotten them."

"One does not forget old friends so easily."

"Don't you think so? Then I hope you will prove it by coming to see us."

"I shall be most happy," said Dick, now quite sure of having conquered himself, and placed his old acquaintance on a thoroughly unsentimental footing.

Mrs. Lancaster's behavior was as good as could be expected from a born flirt, and a good deal of Dick's security was based on being able to meet her on her own ground. He had it in him to become one of those idle waters of the best thing in the world, and probably might have done so had he stayed in England; but the truth and freedom of his colonial life had both hardened and softened his heart in the right way; and I think one might say for Dick, at this time, that he only flirted with flirts.

When she had got the promise of a visit, Flora became much more cheerful, and discreetly avoiding old times, asked many intelligent questions about New Zealand and his doings there.

They turned up to the right, still strolling slowly up the hill, and stopped at the iron gate of a little square garden. Here Dick gave up the parcels; but after he had opened the gate again with the old familiar catch, there were still a few last words to be said, and he stood leaning with his elbows on the top bar, the stars coming out over his head, the air full of roses and jessamine, till one would certainly have fancied that those ten years had vanished like a dream. At last came the final good-night, with a very cordial shake of the hand; and Dick, remembering his aunt, walked off in a great hurry.

"As silly as ever, but very nice," was Mrs. Lancaster's verdict as she went into the house.

Miss Northcote had come down stairs, and was standing on the doorstep with Polly Fenner, the old man's granddaughter, looking up and down the lane for Dick. Polly a rosy girl of eighteen, thought it great fun, and proposed setting off to hunt for him.

"He'll be tired of waiting, and gone home," she suggested. "I'll be proud to walk up with you, ma'am."

"No, Polly, thank you. Here he is, I think."

Dick came striding down the hill with the haste of a bad conscience.

"I hope you have not been waiting long," he said, politely.

"O, no. Good-night, Polly," and Miss Northcote stepped down into the road and took his offered arm.

"It was good of you to hurry back," she said, as they walked away. "Were you visiting some of your old haunts?"

"No not exactly. I met an old friend, and walked home with her. Flora Cardew; odd, wasn't it?"

"Mrs. Lancaster."

"Hang Lancaster! I beg his pardon, poor fellow. I forgot he was dead," Dick added, penitently. "But I am always forgetting his existence. I never saw him, you know. He came the very day I sailed."

"Yes, I believe he did," said Miss Northcote.

She would not either laugh or remonstrate now. Dick was his own master, and if he chose to be so terribly foolish, there was no help for it. Any remark might only make matters worse. But her heart sank very sadly as she walked up the hill, leaning on her nephew's strong arm. She need not have hoped that Mrs. Lancaster would lose the opportunity—still, she might have waited a few days, Miss Northcote thought, before she pounced upon him. The very first evening—it was almost too hard.

Aunts, if they are unmarried, ought to be the least selfish of human beings; and to do Kate Northcote justice, though Dick was the only relation she had left, she would have given him up without a moment's thought of her own loss to any one she thought worthy of him. But not to Flora Lancaster!

Though his aunt said nothing, Dick understood that the subject was not a welcome one. He thought she need not be afraid, but did not tell her so. He began to talk rather eagerly about his plan for pulling up the Penyr to Pensand Combe, and then went back to his companion on the train. He felt sure she could not be over sixteen.

"Well, you may be right, Dick," said Miss Northcote. "I have not talked to her. But I did not think it such a very young face."

"But she had none of the ways of a grown-up person. She was just like a school-girl. I wonder how she will get on at Pensand. I suspect the life there will be dreadful to her, for she told me she cared for nothing so much as being free. And General Hawke makes everybody in his house go on by clockwork. Randal used to tell me so. He never could bear it. By the by, where is Randal?"

"In London, I think," said Miss Northcote. "He is here sometimes. He grows more like the General in some things, but he will never be so good-looking."

"What a brute he was!" said Dick, reflectively.

"Was he, Dick? We always look upon him as a respectable character."

"Do you? Well, he may be respectable now. But I used to hear things about him in the village which I never told you. I'm not going to rake them up now, so peace be with him. You will go to-morrow afternoon, Aunt Kate? We ought to start at half-past three."

"Yes; I should like very much to go. You used to be a good boatman."

"That's settled, then."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

A SURPRISING YOKE OF OXEN.

What Careful Training Will Do for Seemingly Stupid Animals.

(New York Sun.)

Barnum has two wonderful oxen. They crawl on their knees, a sea-saw on a board, fire a pistol, mount a pedestal, and execute a waltz. They are three-year-olds this spring, and are twins. They are almost exactly alike, and can only be told apart by the difference of the white spots upon their flanks. Mr. P. T. Barnum is their owner, and they were trained for his show by the veteran elephant trainer, Charles White, who began to work with them in November last, after the season closed. The task was not undertaken with much hope of a successful result, for the trainers had never thought it worth while to spend time upon an animal which, in domestic use, seemed to require the noisy "goes" and "haws" of an ox driver, coupled with the cruelty of the lash or goad, to make it do even the simple duty of a beast of burden.

Mr. Charles White bought the oxen of Mr. Henry M. Taft of Uxbridge, Mass., who had purchased them when calves and made pets of them. He had also taught them a few simple tricks, such as climbing steps, getting upon a pedestal and dropping upon their knees. He had christened them Moody and Sankey because, he said, of the good he expected them to do in the world. Mr. White could tell the habits of an elephant, a lion, a camel, a zebra, a dromedary, or a deer, but he had to begin a study of the daily life of an ox. He spent one Sunday with them, observing what they seemed to like best, and how they could best be controlled. His experience with oxen was limited to the noise and confusion caused by their drivers in the West. He soon concluded that, like all other animals, they could be ruled best by kindness. After the purchase they were put into training at Newton, L. I., where the show wintered.

"The first thing necessary in training the oxen," said Mr. White, "was kindness; then patience. I began in November last, not knowing whether I could get them taught in time for this season at all, but I soon found them so tractable that my hopes began to be raised. It took me just a day to learn that it wasn't necessary to strike a blow or to speak a word. The farmers who go along shouting at their oxen and goading them waste their breath and strength. A dozen yoke of oxen could be taught to draw a load a hundred miles without a word or a blow. It is only necessary that the farmer should lead, show the direction, and the beasts, if they have been kindly treated and have an affection for their master, will do the rest. These oxen were trained by uniform kindness.

A series of tricks in regular order was fixed upon and I put them through them every day. I was with them nearly all of the time, and they followed me like two pet kittens. There was a ring in the stables, where I taught them day by day. First, with food in my hands, I got them to follow me around the ring in any direction I chose to take. In this way I got them to go along on their knees, and to waltz. What they knew when I got them had practically been taught, as it was all done by "goes" and "haws." I found that they were quick of sight, and that having taught them certain things I needed after that to simply get where they could see me, and to give them a cue by the motion of my body or my whip in a certain direction. In this way the waltz was taught, and when they go around the ring on their knees I keep ahead of them and they follow me."

"How did you learn them to fire a pistol?"

"By a piece of carrot fastened to the trigger by a string."

"Do they know their names?"

"Yes; I can call Moody, and he comes, but somehow Sankey is always sure to follow."

"Do you expect them to forget their tricks?"

"No; I find that they are anxious to do them, and I can put them through at any time or in any place. The first night in New York they acted a little strange, but they soon got over that, and now they don't mind the music, the crowds, or the lights."

While Mr. White was talking the two oxen were following their keeper around the dressing tent. Their large round honest eyes seemed full of kindness. Zazal, clad in seal-skin, went lovingly up to Moody and adjusted the red and blue ribbons tied beneath the brass tips on his horns. Mue, Dockrill, with a red mantle about her shoulders, and all in gauze and white, ready for her "principal act," danced about to the music, and in a graceful pirouette came in front of Sankey, whose head she stroked. Goshen, the giant, who dreams of the day when his circus life will end, and he can live among oxen of his own on his New Jersey farm, said that upon his word he had never seen anything in the show line equal to that trained yoke of oxen.

"They are such honest, good creatures," said the giant, "one can't help liking them." When Goshen stood beside Moody, it would have seemed as natural for him to have picked the ox up as for Mme. Neilson to have picked up one of her trained doves but he merely tapped the animal fondly upon the head. The keeper of the trained oxen ran out, and the animals trotted after him, playfully raking each other's horns. Mr. White seized his whip and ran after them, made a bow to the audience, turned to the oxen, and with a sweep of his whip both Moody and Sankey dropped on their knees, in which position they followed him around the ring. Then Sankey lay down and Moody passed over him sideways and then jumped over his back. Then Sankey went up the seesaw board backward, until he reached the centre, where he balanced himself until Moody had placed all fours upon the board. Then Sankey backed. Moody leaned forward, and they began to go up and down, while the band played "Sweet Little Buttercup." Then the oxen climbed the wooden steps, to the tune of "Fair Moon, to Thee I Sing," and the performance ended with a lively waltz. The oxen trotted back to their tent, and were led around to their beds of hay among the wild beasts. "After my experience with these oxen," said Mr. White, "I believe I can train any animal, no matter how stupid it seems."

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